/11 cont./

286 garments /pandjes/ or articles of dress and other knitted goods.
[413] They also know how to make very attractive hammocks of cotton.

Chapter VII

Food, Drinks, Delicacies, and so forth.

262 [252] Their daily food is mainly rice and camava (1) bread which

1. Sweet camava, the farina from the root of the Janipha manihot, not to be confused with Jatropha manihot, which gives the bitter camava, which, however much is removed by boiling and continued washing, contains a very poisonous component.

is baked on an iron plate and provides a tasty food that can be [241] kept for a long time. During the dry season, the months of September, October, and November, the ground also supplies them with a very mealy and tasty tuber called nappi (?); throughout the year,

2. Dioscorea sativa and Dioscorea alata L.

however, they grow yams, sweet potatoes (3), tayers (4), and camava.

3. Convolvulus batatas L. and Batatas edulis Choisy.

4. Root from Arum esculentum.

[439] They have bananas only from time to time, whenever they exchange them on plantations for squared wood, which they purposely work for this exchange. [432] They know how to obtain wild game [263] and fish in great quantities; salt is an article greatly in demand.

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Agriculture among the Bush Negroes of the Marowijne /Maroni/

by D. C. Geijskes (1)

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1. Introduction

When one goes to the small communities of the inhabitants of the bush who live in the interior districts of Surinam, one quickly sees, upon examination, the basis on which the maintenance of such communities rests. The struggle for existence among primitive peoples covers the food supply and the resistance that can be offered against illness and pests. These two factors ultimately determine the birth surplus, which at a result expresses the possibility for survival.

Among the Bush Negroes we see in the course of the years an increase in the population, an advance, therefore, in spite of the obstructions of nature. But this advance creates new problems. It was during the Medical-Scientific Expedition to the Southern Border of Surinam, held from February to July, 1952, that, in conjunction with the medical investigation in the gathering of data about the "housekeeping" of the Bush Negroes of the Marowijne /Maroni/ and the Tapanahoni, we were struck above all by the problem of the food supply and the food itself. There is little sense in paying attention only to medical care unless at the same time attempts are made to improve the food.

An important part of the food supply is produced by agriculture. This supplies the Bush Negroes with the most, but not the best food. Next to it a number of forest products serve to provide for the need for food fats, while hunting and fishing must provide the protein.

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circumstances because with their lower population density they are less seriously in need of land. But the same fate awaits them in the near future. In addition, the cutting of the forest has more serious consequences in this region because as a result exploitable timber is lost. Along the Tapanahoni, above the greater falls, woodcutting is impossible for the time being, so that the loss of wood in these districts does not as yet play an economic role here.

6. Measures toward Improvement

●431 The question now is whether the grounds-operations of the Bush Negroes must be regulated by a higher authority. My advice is: The /143/ sooner improvement can be brought about in this, the better, and for the following reasons.

[32] 1st. Because of the grounds-system practiced from olden times, the Aucaners of the Tapanahoni in particular now have such a land shortage that further growth of the population is thereby hindered.

[262] 2nd. The food supply of this Bush Negro society is precarious and one-sided; this threatens to become more and more unfavorable, with the consequence that the health situation will require more and more care.

3rd. The Bush Negroes cannot be considered capable of bringing about changes for the better in these agricultural methods by themselves.

[167] 4th. Occupying these districts becomes less and less attractive for the younger generation, whereby a spreading of the [164] population over other areas takes place. The men try to find work in the lowlands or in the concerns in French Guiana.

5th. Through the wasteful use of land the supplies of wood along the rivers are in danger of becoming lost entirely.

6th. It is to be feared that unless help is offered through government channels in time to help this bush population out of the impasse, its social and economic retrogression will soon become seriously felt.

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433 The solution of this problem in my opinion lies in this, that in the first place agricultural methods which are based upon a better and more economical use of the land must be practiced. It is the task of the Department of Agriculture to investigate which possibilities the lands permit and which crops can best be cultivated; it is for this reason that to these observations is added a list of crops presently in use among the Bush Negroes. A small team of young Bush Negroes will have to be trained by the Agricultural Information Service to familiarize them with the new methods.

Next to that, combating the ants will have to be seriously taken in hand in conjunction with the plans for a modified agriculture. For this, too, people from the area itself will have to receive training, and a permanent work-team will have to be formed. It is unfeasible and unnecessary to clear the entire area now in use. Insecticides such as carbon sulfate, methylbromide, and parathion -- applied with the necessary caution -- could be used with success in places.

/144/ The District Administration will also have to provide co-operation in order to find a compromise between the customary laws of the Bush Negroes and the new regulations to be introduced concerning the use of land.

7. The Cultivated Crops and Their Use

241 [171] [114] Although for the most part the cultivated plants are those generally in use as agricultural crops in Suriname, there is still not much known in detail concerning the crops that are cultivated by the Bush Negroes for their sustenance. Giving a general survey of these plants is thus necessary first of all, with a report on the way in which they are used.

[174] From a more historical point of view it is of interest to point to a number of important plants that are of African origin and have only still remained in use among the Bush Negroes, such as [177] agobo and bongila. Furthermore presumably there are still varieties of ordinary cultivated plants present here -- such as sugar cane, bacove and bananas, species of tajer and yams -- from the

B /510 cont./
521 relatives, nor any power of the man over the woman, nor even
B household cohabitation. The man and the woman each reside in
591 the village of their maternal kin. The man goes to live with his
593 wife from time to time, providing her with the imported commodities that she needs, notably salt, kerosene, cloth, and utensils, and felling trees for the clearings which she will exploit
B for the benefit of the household.
586 Divorce is entirely free. Unions are not very stable, mainly on account of the woman. Numbers of women are divorced four to five times during their lives.

B The grand man, chief of the tribe, exercises over the Boni a
643 power which is more religious than political.

B The Boni are a pirogue-people. For more than a century they
433 have been living by using their canoes for the benefit of gold-seekers
178 and exploiting miners. The decline of gold extraction is depriving
[501] them more and more of their traditional resources. Some of them
[167] are emigrating temporarily to the coastal lumberyards. But all of them remain faithful to their villages and to their customs.

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R The Oayana Indians (Roucouyennes /Rucuyen/). These Indians of the
101 Caribe /Carib/ ethnic group have had only a few direct contacts
177 with European civilization and still represent without alteration the
144 human type which populated Guiana before the arrival of the
R Europeans. On encountering the Refugee Blacks, the Indians of the
161 Guianese forest have been steadily and rapidly declining. Estimated at 30,000 at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Indians
R of French Guiana are now no more than about a thousand. In
101 addition there must be included in this number 700 persons (Galibi and
162 Arawak) who have been protected by their habitat in the savannas of
131 the coast where malaria is less deadly than in the interior.

R The accounts of travelers and the censuses made notably in
175 1730, 1759, 1787, and 1815 allow one to follow with precision
161 this destruction of the autochthonous population since the first settlement of the Europeans in Guiana (2).

2. Dr. André Sausse, op. cit., pp. 67-98.

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137 The region is entirely covered by equatorial forest which the
241 inhabitants clear for their crops, practicing a shifting agriculture
B on burned-over land.
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311 Life is closely tied to the river, on the edge of which are
504 established villages and crops. They scarcely move except by
568 water. Everybody, man, woman, or child, has his pirogue, and
B the children learn to paddle at the same time that they learn to
R walk.
● 433 The principal activities of the two populations are agriculture,
B fishing, and canoeing.
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262 There is scarcely any difference between the dietary resources of the Indians and the Boni. The principal portion is manioc, eaten in the form of cassave (flat cakes cooked on a plate) or of couac (roasted and granulated flour). Then come tubers, yams,
B dasheens, "Carib cabbage" /taro/ and sweet potatoes, bananas
[241] and plantains. The Boni in addition plant mountain rice, from which the yield is small; in return, they eat fewer bananas.
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[226] The protein ration is furnished essentially by fish, eaten fresh or smoked. The Indians, skillful fishermen, never lack
B them. Game furnishes a less regular, but important resource.
R
[231] Animal husbandry, confined to a few chickens raised mainly
[439] to sell, represents only an insignificant part of the diet.
The fat from fish and from animals killed while hunting constitutes the principal portion of lipides. The Boni use in addition, for preparing their meals, a small quantity of maripa palm oil.

Vitamins come from fruit (papaya, pineapple, mangoes), which the Indians eat in greater abundance than the Blacks, from wild spinach, rich in Vitamin A, and palm nuts (awara and caumou),
B eaten in great abundance during the rainy season.
R
146 Neither of the two populations is undernourished. The Indians might have been so temporarily during epidemics, when the adults, having been sick for a long time, were unable to clear sufficient land. But they can supplement an inadequate harvest with a great variety of wild foods that can be gathered.

The diet seems poor in mineral elements and especially in calcium. Traces of rachitis are noticeable among some of the Indian children.

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The scarcity of lipide foods, and, among the Boni, the low consumption of fruit might cause one to fear vitamin deficiencies. In fact, there are no signs of it.

Body hygiene is excellent: Blacks and Indians bathe several times a day and are very fastidious about their persons.

In summary, there is no appreciable difference in the customary activities, agriculture, hunting, and fishing, of the two populations. There is one in economic activity. Among the Boni, who have a greater need for imported objects, the adult men work for wages four to five months per year on the average. These jobs are very laborious and performed under bad dietary conditions, whereas the Indians rest when they are not occupied with their customary tasks, sometimes spending entire days stretched out in the hammock.

The two populations have been in close contact for a long time. The Indian villages farthest downstream have immediate contact with the first crop plantings of the Boni. Without having any tendency to merge (their characters and their customs are too different), Boni and Oayana have maintained regular relations since the end of the eighteenth century, doing a little trade in imported articles exchanged for hammocks and dogs trained for hunting. They often visit each other, and nothing stops the spread of illness from the one group to the other.

In fact, the way of life of the two groups is the same, the environmental conditions have the same influence, and the differences which are observed in the pathology can only be attributed to a different sensitivity with regard to the principal illnesses.

B 164 [114]

Pathology of the Boni. We shall briefly summarize here the observations of Dr. A. Sausse in his work Populations primitives du Maroni.

The pathology of the Boni is characterized by:

-- a resistance to malaria, which means that if the children have had attacks an immunity will develop with age; the size of the spleen diminishes regularly from child to adult. The adults have only episodical attacks which are not serious; in particular

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Since about ten years ago Creole exploiters without any outside aid have built up a herd of several hundred head, principally with an eye to the provisioning of the mining center of Benzdorp. F [508] The existence of an airodrome and regular air connections permits envisaging the export of meat to the coast. F 233 [132] [311] The success of animal raising in the Upper Maroni seems to be attributable to a rainfall lower in total amount than on the coastal strip but better distributed, as well as to the nature of the soil. It is principally on the floodable alluvial strip bordering the river to a width of 500 to 800 meters that cattle find the most favorable conditions, taking refuge on the neighboring hills during the three weeks of annual inundation.

F [461] [464] Winning pastures from the forest and defending them against the encroachment of the bush represents continual work, but it can be carried out on the Maroni far better than on the coast, thanks to the man power of the Refugee Blacks.

F [433] [435] One cannot yet come to a conclusion on the profitableness of this animal raising. Like many other enterprises in Guiana it is handicapped by its too high cost price which prevents effective competition with imported products.

B 101 2) The populations of the Maroni, descending from rebel slaves of the 18th century, who are often called Refugee Blacks, are divided into three tribes: the Djuka, the Paramaka, and the Boni, whose customs are practically identical and whose dialects are very close. These dialects are variations of Taki-taki, vehicular language derived mainly from English, whose use was widespread in the time of slavery and which has become the national language of Surinam.

B 197

B 162 131 The Paramaka, 700 to 800 in number, occupy the lower part of the course of the Maroni from the first waterfall (Hermina) to the junction with Béiman Creek. They are not navigators but farmers and foresters, who furnish highly prized man power for the enterprises of the Saint-Laurent region.

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162 131 361 [103] The Boni, about 1,000 in number, occupy the course of the Lawa between Abounasounga Falls to the north and the falls of the Litani to the south. Their "great villages," that is, their residential villages, are: Agodé (Boniville), Kotika, Asisi, Loka, Papaï'ston, Kormotibo, Lapé, and l'Enfant Perdu. Three small villages founded more recently are established on the lower course of the 563 Maroni. The territorial implantation of the Boni has been disturbed by the settlement of Creole gold miners on their territory 178 for three quarters of a century. Their demographic situation is mediocre and their tribal organization, compared to that of the [181] other tribes, has lost much of its strength. However, they still make up a human grouping full of strength and originality.

131 361 [162] [161] [648] [619] The Djuka, whose "great villages" are in Suriname territory on the /11/ Tapanahoni, can be evaluated at 7,000 to 8,000 in total. At the height of demographic expansion, their farming villages swarm on both banks of the Maroni and on the islands, penetrating more and more deeply into the interior of French Guiana, where in places they form small temporary groupings living in symbiosis with the Creole gold miners; the Boni recognize their right to cross their territory but not that of establishing villages in it.

433 [411] [405] 178 [166] [182] For a century the economy of the Refugee Blacks has been founded on a symbiosis with the Europeans and Creoles; they furnish specialized labor (construction, but above all, transport) in exchange for relatively high wages. This economy finds itself threatened by the gradual disappearance of gold mining; there is developing a tendency toward temporary emigration to the European work yards of Saint-Laurent analogous to that of the Saramaka of Suriname to French Guiana. This is a serious threat to the interior cohesion of the tribes.

6:Hurault--18 K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
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whom African blood predominates are seen; the mulattoes are in general traders, or practice small stock raising.

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The Refugee Blacks are the only population of interior Guiana who can be regarded as perfectly adapted to the environment and capable of subsisting there by their own means. They have a protection against malaria which operates thus: If the children suffer from this endemic disease, resistance appears with age, protecting adults from its attacks.

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They are subject to serious skin diseases, notably to pian, but these maladies have few demographic consequences; only the Boni are seriously attacked by venereal diseases. The Djuka are in the process of very great demographic expansion.

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The strong tribal organization of these populations and their solid implantation on the ground render effective their methods of working, farming, hunting, and fishing, which assure them not only excellent provisionment but considerable means of exchange and a material standard of living superior to that of most of the populations of Africa. The techniques of the Refugee Blacks, especially as regards the squaring of wood, sawing, and building, procure for them resources comparable to those which the populations of the Ivory Coast get from coffee and cacao. /Blank page/

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No form of trade (1) is traditionally observed among them,

1. Since 1954, one of them, enriched by boat transport, set up a food business at Kotika, but this is a man more than half "creolized" and one who established himself in the midst of Creoles.

this activity being for them manifestly tied to the idea of the exploitation of others; there is not even any market in the villages.
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Each person produces, or finds among the people of his own lineage, what food he needs; as for imported objects, the Boni buy them in the course of their trips from the coast traders. That plague of
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African societies, pseudo-trade or parasitism, is unknown to the Refugee Blacks. Just as one meets among them neither ragamuffins nor beggars, one perceives nothing nasty or low in their social relations.

In their collective life there is something aboveboard, clean, which strikes one on first meeting them and which one does not tire of admiring, the further one penetrates into the functioning of their institutions.

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593 [591] [163] Among the Refugee Blacks some very devoted couples are seen, who spend their whole lives together and who, in their old age, have completely united their destinies, living in the same house, either in the woman's village or the man's: for example, in the village of Lapé Tabiki, Butu and his wife Asamani, in 1952 aged about 70 years, together for 45 years and having had eight children. But such cases are exceptional. Besides, they [581] are not admired and held up as an example as one might believe; this man and this woman suited each other, they remained together; if some day they no longer get along, they will divorce, that is all.

595 Polygamy. Polygamy in the African sense of the term, that is, the simultaneous maintenance of several regular households, is exceptional among the Refugee Blacks because of their mode of living:

• [433] [511] --The wife is practically entirely dependent on her husband; an economy based mainly on wage earning and involving a relatively high standard of living makes it impossible for most men to maintain more than one household;

[461] --Even if a man had sizable financial means at his disposal, he could scarcely maintain more than two households; for it is not acceptable, at least nowadays, for him to have done by others the customary chores: clearings, boats, house.

169 595 On January 1, 1958 out of 134 men over 20 years old in the villages on the French bank, whose lives were well known to us, there were:

Men maintaining three households	1	1%
" " two households	18	13%
" " one household	104	77%
[589] Bachelors, widowers, or recent divorcés	11	8%
	134	100% /sic/

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In that can doubtless be seen the most likely explanation of the absence, in the tribes of Refugee Blacks, of any internal trade. There are not even markets in the villages. In practice only Creole and Asian traders are patronized.

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The repugnance which the Refugee Blacks have for trading with one another contributes toward preventing the development of specialized professions among them. Specialization does actually exist: one man is particularly good at building boats, another is a competent carpenter, still another devotes himself mainly to fishing; but the Refugee Blacks exercise these specialties with respect to other peoples and not with respect to one another. Nobody fails to build his own boat, his house, to cut his clearings himself. If it were otherwise, classes and castes would rapidly be created, and that is precisely what the moral law of the Refugee Blacks condemns. A special effect of this conception is to preserve family custom from deteriorating, by preventing the rich from becoming great polygamists maintaining idle mistresses. We have never heard it said that a richer man paid someone to perform for him the customary work he owes to his wives, clearings, house, boat. Whatever his wealth may be, he continues to do these jobs by the sweat of his brow, and that contributes toward maintaining in its meaning and value the tacit contract concluded between husband and wife.

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Thus the geographic conditions, associated with influences of a social and psychological order, impose on the Refugee Blacks a unique economy, based on a symbiosis with the coast populations in the form of piece-work or temporary wage-earning.